

THE ORIGIN OF PEOPLE

(Panamint Valley, California. Shoshone; submitted by Wendy Ireland)

The earth was covered with water. The water dried up quickly. At this time the birds and animals were men.

Coyote was walking along the Panamint Mountains, when he saw a very beautiful woman who had very white skin. Her name was pabon' posiats, "tan louse." She was carrying a jug of water. Coyote followed her, and when he came up to her, he said, "I am very thirsty. Give me a drink of water." She pointed to a place (about one-half a mile away) and told him to go over there, and she would give him a drink. Coyote did so. When she came up to him, she again pointed to a distant place and told him to go there. In this way she continued to put him off until they reached her home.

The girl lived with her mother. The mother said to her, "Where did you get him?" Coyote went to some water and started to drink. While he was drinking the girl tried to strike him several times, but Coyote dodged each time. Then she said to him, "You go into the house," pointing to a big hole in the house. Coyote went in, and saw many bows and arrows around the walls of the house. During the night Coyote's advances toward the women were frustrated. In the morning Coyote asked the woman who owned the bows and arrows. She told him to take them and to hunt some ducks. That day Coyote killed ducks and caught fish, which he brought back to the house.

In the evening the women cooked the ducks. They ate some and disposed of some . . .

That night Coyote made advances to both the girl and her mother . . .

By morning the girl's belly was large.

She began to bear children, putting them into a large basketry water jug.

She told Coyote that they were his babies.

When Coyote was ready to leave, the girl said to him, "Carry the babies in the jug. These babies will cry for water, but you must be careful. If you give them water, open the stopper only a little or they will get out." She showed him how to give them water.

Coyote started out carrying the jug, which was very heavy. As he went along, the babies cried, "I want water. I am dry!" Coyote said, "They are thirsty; maybe they will die." Coyote opened the jug, and the babies all ran out. They went in all directions. The boys fought among themselves with bows and arrows. These people became the different Indian tribes.